

## **AT Advisory Council**

Minutes for the November 15, 2006 meeting

### Members Present:

**Bill Ager**, consumer; **Noah Hershkowitz**, consumer; **John Nousaine**, ILC representative; **Meg Steimle**, parent representative; **Brent Odell**, DPI representative; **Bob White**, DVR representative

### Members Not Present:

**Betsy Gruba**, consumer; **Jackie Wells**, consumer; **Kevin Ammons**, consumer.

### Staff and Others Present:

**Holly Laux O'Higgins**, WisTech Director; **Sharon Vivian**, CART accommodations provider; **John Reiser**, Director, Office for Independence and Employment; **Patti Kraemer**, WisLoan Statewide Coordinator

### Location:

Options for Independent Living, Green Bay

### **Review of minutes from August meeting**

Motion: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Meg Steimle, seconded by Noah Hershkowitz.

Discussion: None

Vote: The vote to approve was unanimous.

## **DHFS Update**

### *AT Kits for ADRCs*

Holly described the AT kits that will be made available to the Aging and Disability Resource Centers. The kits:

- ✓ Will be provided to the ADRCs at no cost. Some ADRCs have requested more than one; we are providing some ADRCs with as many as four kits.
- ✓ Training will be provided at each ADRC in 2007. A contract between SVRI and CILWW and IndependenceFirst was negotiated for the time and expertise of Laura Plummer and Cindi Pichler, respectively. They will incorporate the participation of AT staff from the local ILC to facilitate referrals to the ILCs during the training at the ADRC.
- ✓ The kits are based on a successful project implemented as part of the Aging in Place efforts of the Iowa Assistive Technology Program and have been replicated in 15 states across the country.
- ✓ Wisconsin's AT kits will focus on low-tech AT for adults with disabilities and elders.
- ✓ Jane Gay, the director of the Iowa AT Program will meet with Holly, Ralph, Laura, Cindi and representatives from SVRI to train the trainers on the AT kit.

### *Trainings – State Leadership Activities*

Holly reviewed the document summarizing DHFS activities from April through September 2006 under the State Leadership category. This document is available on request.

### *Data Collection and Program Data*

Holly handed out a summary of WisTech Device Loan program data for the federal fiscal year 2006 (October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006). Council members felt those data did not provide a picture about the volume of AT services in Wisconsin because there were no previous data against which to compare them. In response to complaints from some members that those data were not specific or detailed enough to be meaningful, members from the Device Loan program at the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) said that collecting data to the level of detail that Council members were seeking is unrealistic and intrusive. The current level of data collection is extremely time-consuming.

Noah discussed the value of normalizing the numbers in order to create meaningful data from those data the AT programs are required to collect. Discussion also addressed the difficulty of normalizing these numbers against the incidence of disability in the population because of variable interpretations of the term ‘disability’ and the variety of ways disability is measured (e.g. the US Census measures disability primarily through mobility activities).

Holly and Patti (WisLoan) talked about the different outcomes that the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is using to determine the nationwide success of the AT programs. These are Access to Devices and Acquisition of Devices. The Access outcome is measured using data from Device Loan and Device Demonstration programs; the Acquisition outcome is measured using data from Device Reutilization and the Alternative Financing Program.

### *Council Summit in December and the State Plan for Independent Living*

The Council Summit was discussed as an opportunity for all the various Councils to get together and pool their efforts to affect change around disability policy. Holly, Noah and Chris will be attending the event on Friday, December 8, 2006 in Madison.

### *Evaluating SPAT Attachment Eight Activities*

At the August 2006 meeting the Council asked to learn about how State Leadership activities (described in Attachment Eight of the State Plan for AT) are being measured and evaluated for effectiveness. The primary tools used to evaluate these activities are feedback forms and post-training surveys.

Holly and Ralph will meet with Noah to determine other methods for evaluating State Leadership activities. State Leadership activities include training, technical assistance, collaboration and public awareness around AT.

### *Meeting Locations and Dates for 2007*

Council meetings for 2007 are scheduled for:

- February 14, 2007 in Menomonie
- May 16, 2007 in Waukesha
- August 15, 2007 in LaCrosse
- November 14, 2007 in Madison

Locations are being determined. All final locations, agendas and minutes will be posted at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/wistech/AssistTechAdvisBoard.htm>.

An updated roster of Council members will be sent out to all the members and will be posted on the website.

### *WisTech Outreach Materials and Communication*

WisTech is developing a logo and a brochure to describe WisTech services. Council members Meg Steimle and Chris Coppess will provide feedback and input on the development of the brochure. The logo will be distributed to all partner agencies and subcontractors to use for WisTech-related materials.

Holly has communicated to the Device Loan and Device Demonstration centers at the ILCs that the term 'loan closet' needs to be replaced with Device Loan and Device Demonstration to be consistent with the language used by RSA. The ILCs have been asked to change all references of 'loan closet' in agency literature and on their websites. They have also been asked to include the language: "This program is part of the WisTech network of Device Loan and Device Demonstration programs. WisTech is funded through a federal grant, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services" on their websites and in agency literature. Holly and Ralph will follow up with the ILCs on this topic in January.

### **Tour of Options for Independent Living Model Home**

Sandy Popp provided the members of the Council with a tour of the Options for Independent Living model accessible home.

### **Assistive Technology and the Role of Disability Rights Wisconsin**

Monica Murphy and Tracy Reed from Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) spoke to the Council members about the role of DRW around assistive technology in Wisconsin. DRW is Wisconsin's federally recognized Protection and Advocacy Agency.

Much of the work of DRW around AT focuses on accessible voting machines and locations. They also work with the Health Insurance Risk Sharing Program (HIRSP) to have Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices covered, and with school districts for children in transition to use the AAC device with which the student is the most comfortable and familiar.

Tracy also discussed her work around denials of Durable Medical Equipment (DME) for consumers which includes advocacy, appeals, and representation at hearings. She is also working on addressing changes to Medicare's coverage of power mobility devices. DRW

also offers a broad range of school AT services, and helps people with MA and Family Care cases.

Holly will contact Monica to identify a liaison between DRW and the Council and to discuss ways in which WisTech can work collaboratively with DRW on AT issues.

### **Assistive Technology Resource Center**

Cayte Anderson from the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (SVRI) brought the Council up to speed on the status of the Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC). The ATRC is a collaborative effort between WisTech, SVRI and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) to develop an online portal to all Wisconsin assistive technology resources.

The Council discussed with Cayte the value of including information that empowers people to be wise consumers when purchasing assistive technology. The ATRC is still addressing issues of sustainability. The first year of funding was intended to pay for the initial set up and development of the website; sustainability of ongoing maintenance is being addressed.

The ATRC is expected to be up-and-running in early Spring 2007.

### **Board member involvement – strategies for invigorated Council members**

This discussion point touched on the need for Council members to be active workers on the Council, and not passive recipients of information. In order to facilitate this, Holly will investigate employing a discussion tool that allows all the members to communicate in a web-based, blog environment.

The Council discussed roles the members should play as advisors to the WisTech program. These include:

- ✓ Advisory fiscal role, including setting priorities for how funding is used
- ✓ Liaison positions at different councils; identify other councils that should have an AT voice

The Council will address these roles by:

- ✓ Develop a canned presentation for the AT council members to present at other councils
- ✓ At each meeting there will be a round robin discussion where each member will talk about AT developments in their region of the state.
- ✓ Developing a strategic plan based on the SPAT.
- ✓ Talking to AT Program directors in other states to see how they use their Council effectively.

The Council would like to see the following deliverables at the next meeting in February 2007:

- ✓ Holly will provide a comprehensive list of the other councils.
- ✓ The Council members will identify which members can attend which councils.

**Filling Council Vacancies**

Betsy Gruba, the representative of people who are blind and visually impaired resigned from the Council. The Council decided to fill Betsy's position and the remainder of her term with a candidate drawn from the top candidates used to fill the most recent vacancies.

Motion: A motion to fill Betsy's position from the candidates from the last round of recruitment was made by Brent Odell, seconded by Bob White.

Discussion: Holly will provide information about the top candidates to the Council members via email. The Council members can discuss the candidates via the blog or (if the blog is not yet up) email. Holly will choose a date by which all members need to cast a vote for a candidate via email. All votes will be emailed to Jackie as the nominations committee chairperson. Jackie will inform Holly as to the result of the vote.

Vote: The vote to approve was unanimous.

To address the larger issue of recruitment, Holly will organize a meeting with Meg, Bill and Jackie to revise recruitment materials and evaluation criteria. These revised materials will be presented to the Council at the February meeting.

**Disbursing the \$1,000 in Subgrant Funding**

The Council decided to create a committee to address ideas and suggestions for how to distribute and create a competition for the subgrant funding. The Council members serving on this committee will be: Kyle Kleist, AT Council; Ted Pyke, Independent Living Council of Wisconsin (ILC-W); Bob White, DVR/AT Council; and a WisTech staff person (either Holly or Ralph). Holly will check on the federal rules for subgranting.

This committee will bring their ideas and suggestions to the February meeting.

**Public Comment**

A number of consumers spoke to the Council about the assistance and assistive technology they acquired through the Device Loan and Device Demonstration program.